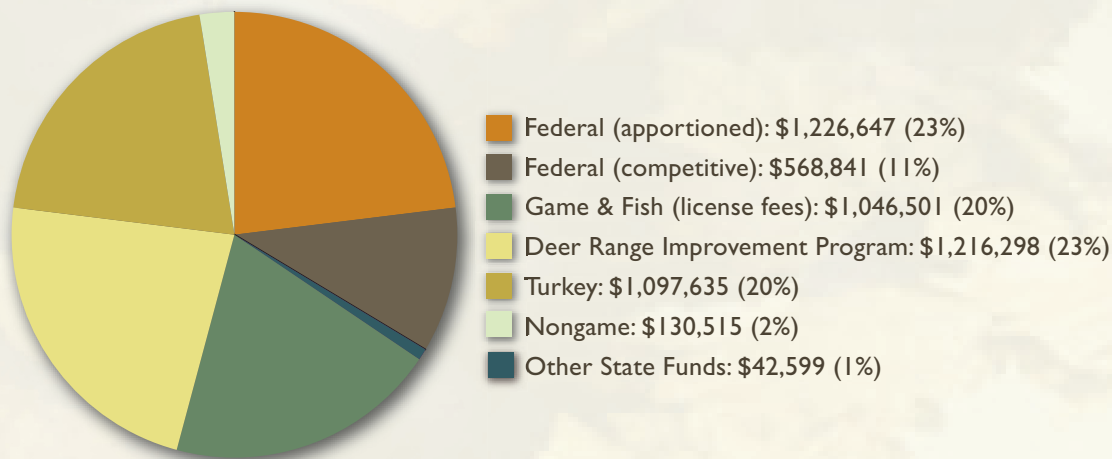




Habitat Management

Fiscal Year 2010

Habitat Management Expenditures by Fund Source



The Wildlife Division invested:

- 56,717 hours on public-land habitat management; and
- 8,602 hours on private-land habitat management.

Public Lands Management

The Wildlife Division helps provide Michigan residents and visitors with unique and accessible wildlife-related experiences through maintenance of state game and wildlife management areas and facilities. The division has sole land-management responsibilities on approximately 450,000 acres in 161 wildlife management areas, located mainly in the southern half of the Lower Peninsula. The Wildlife Division is also jointly responsible, with the DNR Forest Management Division, for planning and land management on 3.9 million acres of state forest.

The division evaluates habitat to determine the effects of management and to assess how effective management activities have been in meeting stated objectives. Division staff conducts habitat evaluation routinely after timber harvesting on state land and periodically during the course of grassland and wetland management – for example, to determine if additional weed control is necessary or if water-level manipulation schedules should be altered.

Habitat management activities generally fall into the categories of setting back succession or improving the ecological integrity of an existing habitat. The Wildlife Division typically manages habitat for wildlife in grasslands, forests and wetlands.

Grasslands

Savannas are relatively open habitats that have a more significant tree component than openings, which are habitats dominated by grasses or forbs, with trees as a minor or nonexistent component. Most management of openings and savannas is aimed at setting back succession, minimizing encroachment by woody vegetation, controlling growth of undesired plants, and planting grasses and forbs to achieve a desired plant-species composition. The Wildlife Division enhances or manages savannas through practices such as mechanical

vegetation control (mowing, bulldozing, etc.), prescribed burning, chemical treatment for invasive species and timber removal. Efforts to maintain a grass-dominated system in an opening, or to achieve specific characteristics in an established opening, include mechanical vegetation control, prescribed burning, chemical treatment for invasive species and planting. Establishing or restoring permanent openings to meet wildlife habitat management objectives involves brush clearing, disking, planting and spraying.

Forests

To meet specific forest health and wildlife management objectives on state game and wildlife management areas, the division conducts forest management activities that may involve prescribed burning, planting or initiating harvest within specific parameters intended to achieve defined habitat objectives. Management recommendations usually aim at benefiting multiple species, and always consider long-term goals for forest health and wildlife productivity. Other aspects of forest management include marking a forest stand for treatment and preparing timber-sale specifications and contracts for completing the treatment. The Wildlife Division does much of this work in partnership with Forest Management Division.

Wetlands

The Wildlife Division has a strong wetlands/waterfowl management program, and many state game and state wildlife areas contain complex wetlands systems, often supported by an array of dikes, ditches, dams, pumps and water-control structures. The division also manages numerous wildlife floodings located within state forests. To achieve or maintain desired conditions of existing wetlands, division staff carries out activities such as planting, chemical and mechanical vegetation control, prescribed burning, water-level manipulation and maintenance of water-control structures used to alter water levels.

Wildlife Improvement Projects on State Game Areas

Examples:

Allegan State Game Area – The Wildlife Division, through contracts with Quantum Construction and Remington Excavating, removed woody encroachment and invasive species on several sites at the Allegan State Game Area's Fennville Farm Unit. Both contractors used heavy equipment to clean vegetation and left the sites tillable. With support from Pheasants Forever, Allegan staff established native grasslands to provide valuable wildlife habitat as outlined by the Allegan State Game Area Master Plan. As the number of acres in this grassland complex grows, additional wildlife species will find these fields suitable for nesting and brooding, which should lead to improvements in those populations.

Gourdneck State Game Area – Several large piles of woody debris at Gourdneck State Game Area in Kalamazoo County were inhibiting the Wildlife Division's ability to restore the native prairie in the area. The division used a contract with a local excavating company to move the piles to a more suitable location, and seed was purchased to re-establish native prairie.

Public Land Management

Habitat Activity	Accomplishments	Planned (Acres)	Hours Invested
Brush management	140	254	984
Herbaceous planting	8,846	10,473	10,278
Forest management	35,282	18,903	9,490
Openings maintenance	7,343	6,228	17,627
Creating wildlife openings	Weren't reported	20	367
Wetland maintenance	38,149	32,340	5,525
Wetland creation	5	5	83
Prescribed burning	1,102	360	3,004
Habitat evaluation	791	7,574	721
Invasive species management	2,075	2,147	3,991
Native grassland management	692	730	1,838

Private Lands Program

Seventy-nine percent of Michigan's land is privately owned. Agricultural cropland, almost completely privately owned, offers excellent opportunities for habitat conservation. Important vegetation types such as emergent wetlands and oak and aspen forest also are found mainly on private lands. These cover types are valued for their importance in providing habitat for many game and furbearer species such as deer, turkey, elk, waterfowl, pheasants, bobwhite quail, muskrats, raccoons and coyotes. Furthermore, more than three-quarters of the occurrences of state and federally listed endangered species in Michigan are located on private land, and 40 percent are found entirely on private land.

Though hunter access to private lands can be limited, especially in the southern Lower Peninsula, 83 percent of Michigan hunters hunt on private lands. Deer, turkey, pheasant, waterfowl and rabbit hunting are dependent on private lands, while bear and grouse hunting take place more often on public lands. White-tailed deer is the most popular game species in Michigan, and 87 percent of the annual harvest occurs on private land.

Similar to public-lands management, private-lands habitat management activities generally fall into the categories of setting back succession, advancing succession or improving the ecological integrity of an existing habitat. Many private-lands projects are supported by specific grants or funding sources. For example, a Conservation Innovation Grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) funds habitat projects for

grassland birds on hay lands and pastures; the Wildlife Management Institute provided funding for management of early successional forest on private lands for woodcock; and Competitive State Wildlife Grants from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) fund habitat projects on private lands for rare species and those in decline. Other activities are funded by specific restricted funds from the sale of turkey or deer licenses.

The Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) was established to create partnerships between the DNR and private landowners, to identify common habitat management goals and to provide financial and technical assistance to help landowners achieve those goals. Private landowners may apply to this cost-sharing program with specific projects to manage wildlife habitat for game and non-game species, conserve natural communities and declining species, and promote biological diversity on their lands.

Private-lands activities fall under two major categories: technical and financial assistance. Technical assistance includes providing landowners with resource-management aids such as written information, specification sheets or a habitat management plan. In some cases, the Wildlife Division provides financial assistance with the actual implementation of habitat projects by supplying planting material or herbicides or contracting for habitat services from the private sector or through grants to the landowner.

The Wildlife Division obtained a \$457,449 grant from the USDA to expand the Hunter Access Program, with a goal of increasing public access to private lands from 8,000 acres on 53 farms in 2010 to more than 15,000 acres on 100 properties by 2013.

Working with the USDA on conservation provisions of the federal Farm Bill, the Wildlife Division helped guide habitat practices that impacted 2,908 acres in the Habitat Incentive Program, 1,436 acres in the Wetlands Reserve Program, 8,800 acres in the Conservation Reserve Program and thousands of acres in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program.



Pictured from left to right; helicopter used to seed Gourdneck State Game Area; prescribed burning; native grass

Private Land Management

Habitat Activity	Technical Assistance			Financial Assistance		
	Number of landowners	Accomplish-ments (Acres)	Planned (Acres)	Number of landowners	Accomplish-ments (Acres)	Planned (Acres)
Mesic conifer, pine barrens and grasslands	88	7,847	2,050	25	1,095	450
Grassland birds on agricultural lands	35	5,090	1,400	15	1,114	700
Oak savanna and wetlands	18	1,983	600	16	673	300
Woodcock habitat	16	1,324	900	5	913	450
Turkey habitat	21	1,591	600	0	0	0
Deer habitat	5	4,177	400	38	497	0
Total	221	22,509		61	3,795	



Pictured from left to right: Wildlife Assistant Vern Stephens and Wildlife Technician Bruce Warren pot crabapple trees that will be transplanted to game and wildlife areas around the state to provide food sources and habitat for wild turkey; a Wildlife Division employee prepares land for planting; a wildflower planting